

# Grassroots group pressure King on Muslim hearings

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WASHINGTON (RNS) House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Peter King is facing grassroots pressure to cancel his planned hearings on the "radicalization" of U.S. Muslims.

"He is doing precisely what President George Washington promised would not happen: he is sanctioning bigotry and assisting persecution toward the Muslim community," said Rabbi Arthur Waskow, director of the Philadelphia-based Shalom Center.

Waskow's progressive activists on Thursday (Feb. 17) launched a "Let Freedom Ring; Phone Congressman King" campaign urging the Long Island Republican to focus on the "real gaps in protecting homeland security."

King says the hearings are necessary because law enforcement officials have complained that Muslims often do not cooperate in investigations. He has largely brushed off the critics, saying he is "too busy preparing for the hearings" to respond to campaigns launched by Muslim groups, Amnesty International, the Interfaith Alliance and others.

Also Thursday, a coalition of more than 80 religious leaders from Long Island urged King to cancel the hearings and open a dialogue with a variety of participants.

"A more constructive approach to strengthening the bonds of trust that bolster our security and protect our values would be convening a dialogue among faith leaders, law enforcement and elected officials such as yourself," the letter said.